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DISCOURSE ON THE
RESTORATION OF THE
JEWS

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Mordecai M. Noah's Discourse

ON THE

Restoration of the Jews //

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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

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MORDECAI M. NOAH

*Dr Cohn from his friend
the Author*

DISCOURSE

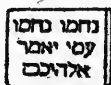
ON THE

RESTORATION OF THE JEWS:

DELIVERED AT THE TABERNACLE, OCT. 23 AND DEC. 2, 1842.

BY M. M. NOAH.

With a Map of the Land of Israel.



NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1845.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE*

MORDECAI MANUEL NOAH, the author of the following address, was born in Philadelphia, Pa., July 14, 1785, and died in New York, May 22, 1851. He was of Portuguese Jewish descent, his father having taken an active part in the American Revolution. He engaged in trade, but soon studied law, and, removing to Charleston, S. C., he entered politics. He was appointed in 1813 to the important post of Consul-general at Tunis, where he rescued several Americans who were held as slaves, and made an unsuccessful attempt to establish schools for the Jews living there. (See Zunz, *G. V.*, p. 489.) He traveled extensively in Europe, and, struck with the contrast between the Jews' position in Europe and the freedom he enjoyed in America, he became convinced of the need of a home for his people, who were treated as strangers in the lands of their birth. Returning to New York, he published (1819) a book on his travels, wrote several popular dramas, and edited a number of influential newspapers. He held the positions of surveyor of the port of New York, judge of the court of sessions, and sheriff. Described as a "pundit in Hebrew law, traditions, and customs," he published in 1840 a translation of the "Book of Jasher."

He advanced projects for the establishment of a Jewish state on three occasions. At the "Consecration of the Synagogue of the Shearith Israel Congregation in the City of New York," on April 17, 1818, he delivered an address in which he says that "when the signal for breaking the Turkish sceptre in Europe" is given, the Jews, who "hold the purse strings and can wield the sword," and "can bring one hundred thousand men into the field," will "possess themselves once more of Syria, and take rank among the nations of the earth." The second plan he proposed was the well-known scheme to open, on Grand Island, near Buffalo, N. Y., upon a site called Ararat (with a play on his own name), a refuge for the Jews pending their final restoration to Palestine. The plan came to naught, after a pompous dedication in an Episcopal church in Buffalo, on September 2, 1825. Finally, on October 28, and December 2, 1844, he delivered the address from which selections follow before large audiences of Jews and Christians. This address, which strikingly recalls modern Zionist projects, attracted much attention, being reported at length in the newspapers of the time.

*This article is reprinted from the *Maccabean* of April, 1905. The copy of the original address used by the editor was lent through the courtesy of Mr. Mendes Cohen and Miss Bertha Cohen, of Baltimore, from the library of their uncle, the late Dr. Joshua I. Cohen.

MORDECAI M. NOAH'S DISCOURSE ON THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS

I HAVE long desired, my friends and countrymen, for an opportunity to appear before you in behalf of a venerable people, whose history, whose sufferings, and whose extraordinary destiny have, for a period of 4000 years, filled the world with awe and astonishment: a people at once the most favored and most neglected, the most beloved, and yet the most persecuted; a people under whose salutary laws all the civilized nations of the earth now repose; a people whose origin may date from the cradle of creation, and who are likely to be preserved to the last moment of recorded time.

Where can we plead the cause of independence for the children of Israel with greater confidence than in the cradle of American liberty? Where ask for toleration and kindness for the seed of Abraham, if we find it not among the descendants of the Pilgrims? Here we can unfurl the standard, and seventeen millions of people will say, "God is with you; we are with you: in his name, and in the name of civil and religious liberty, go forth and repossess the land of your fathers. We have advocated the independence of the South American republics, we have given a home to our red brethren beyond the Mississippi, we have combated for the independence of Greece, we have restored the African to his native land. If these nations were entitled to our sympathies, how much more powerful and irrepressible are the claims of that beloved people, before whom the Almighty walked like a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; who spoke to them words of comfort and salvation, of promise, of hope, of consolation and protection; who swore they should be His people, and he would be their God; who, for their protection and final restoration, dispersed them among the nations of the earth, without confounding them with any."

Within the last twenty-five years great revolutions have occurred in the East, affecting in a peculiar manner the destiny of the followers of Mohammed, and distinctly marking the advancement of the Christian power. Turkey has been deprived of Greece, after a fearful and sanguinary struggle, and the land of warriors and sages has become sovereign and independent. Egypt conquered and occupied Syria, and her fierce pacha had thrown off allegiance to the Sultan. Menaced, however, by the superior power of the Ottoman Porte, Mehemet Ali was com-

pelled to submit to the commander of the faithful, reconveying Syria to Turkey, and was content to accept the hereditary possession of Egypt.

Russia, with a steady glance and firm step, approaches Turkey in Europe, and when her railroads are completed to the Black Sea, will pour in her Cossacks from the Don and the Vistula, and Constantinople will be occupied by the descendants of the Tartar dynasty, and all Turkey in Europe, united to Greece, will constitute either an independent empire, or be occupied by Russia who, with one arm on the Mediterranean, and the other on the North Sea, will nearly embrace all Europe. The counterbalance of this gigantic power will be a firm and liberal union of Austria with all Italy and the Roman States, down to the borders of Gaul; but the revolution will not end here. England must possess Egypt, as affording the only secure route to her possessions in India through the Red Sea; then Palestine, thus placed between the Russian possessions and Egypt, reverts to its legitimate proprietors, and for the safety of the surrounding nations, a powerful, wealthy, independent and enterprising people are placed there by and with the consent of the Christian powers, and with their aid and agency the land of Israel passes once more into the possession of the descendants of Abraham. The ports of the Mediterranean will be again opened to the busy hum of commerce; the fields will again bear the fruitful harvest, and the Christian and Jew will together, on Mount Zion, raise their voices in praise of Him whose covenant with Abraham was to endure forever, and in whose seed all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. This is our destiny. Every attempt to colonize the Jews in other countries has failed; their eye has steadily rested on their own beloved Jerusalem, and they have said, "The time will come, the promise will be fulfilled."

The Jews are in a most favorable position to repossess themselves of the promised land, and organize a free and liberal government; they are at this time zealously and strenuously engaged in advancing the cause of education. In Poland, Moldavia, Wallachia, on the Rhine and Danube, and wherever the liberality of the governments have not interposed obstacles, they are practical farmers. Agriculture was once their natural employment; the land is now desolate, according to the prediction of the prophets, but it is full of hope and promise. The soil is rich, loamy, and everywhere indicates fruitfulness, and the magnificent cedars of Lebanon show the strength of the soil on the highest elevations; the climate is mild and salubrious, and double crops in the lowlands may be annually anticipated. Everything is produced in the greatest variety. Wheat, barley, rye, corn, oats, and the cotton plant are raised in great abundance. The sugar cane is cultivated with success; tobacco grows plentifully on the mountains; indigo is produced in abundance on the banks of the Jordan; olives and olive oil are everywhere found; the mulberry

almost grows wild, out of which the most beautiful silk is made; grapes of the largest kind flourish everywhere, cochineal is procured in abundance on the coast, and can be most profitably cultivated. The coffee-tree grows almost spontaneously; and oranges, figs, dates, pomegranates, peaches, apples, plums, nectarines, pineapples, and all the tropical fruits known to us, flourish everywhere throughout Syria. The several ports in the Mediterranean which formerly carried on a most valuable commerce can be advantageously reoccupied. Manufacturers of wool, cotton, and silk could furnish all the Levant and the islands of Mediterranean with useful fabrics. In a circumference within twenty days' travel of the Holy City, two millions of Jews reside. Of the two and a half tribes which removed east of the trans-Jordanic cities, Judah and Benjamin, and half Manasseh, I compute the number in every part of the world as exceeding six millions. Of the missing nine and a half tribes, part of which are in Turkey, China, Hindostan, Persia, and on this continent, it is impossible to ascertain the numerical force. The whole sect are in a position, as far as intelligence, education, industry, undivided enterprise, variety of pursuits, science, a love of the arts, political economy, and wealth could desire, to adopt the initiatory steps for the organization of a free government in Syria, as I have before said, by, and with the consent, and under the protection of the Christian powers. I propose, therefore, for all the Christian societies who take an interest in the fate of Israel, to assist in their restoration by aiding to colonize the Jews in Judea; the progress may be slow, but the result will be certain. The first step is to solicit from the Sultan of Turkey permission for the Jews to purchase and to hold land; to build houses, and to follow any occupation they may desire, without molestation and in perfect security. There is no difficulty in securing this privilege for them. The moment the Christian powers feel an interest in behalf of the Jewish people, the Turkish government will secure and carry out their views. The moment the Sultan issues his Hatti Scherif, allowing the Jews to purchase and hold land in Syria, subject to the same laws and limitations which govern Mussulmans, the whole territory surrounding Jerusalem, including the villages Hebron, Safat, Tyre, also Beyroot, Jaffa, and other ports of the Mediterranean, will be occupied by enterprising Jews. The valleys of the Jordan will be filled by agriculturists from the north of Germany, Poland, and Russia. Merchants will occupy the seaports, and the commanding positions within the walls of Jerusalem will be purchased by the wealthy and pious of our brethren. Those who desire to reside in the Holy Land, and have not the means, may be aided by those societies to reach their desired haven of repose. Christians can thus give impetus to this important movement; and emigration flowing in, and actively engaged in every laudable pursuit, will soon become consolidated, and lay the foundation for the elements of government

and the triumph of restoration. This, my friends, may be the glorious result of any liberal movement you may be disposed to make in promoting the final destiny of the chosen people.

The discovery and application of steam will be found to be a great auxiliary in the promotion of this interesting experiment. Steam packets to Alexandria leave England every fortnight; a line of packets are established between Marseilles and Constantinople, stopping at the Italian ports, and at Athens and Smyrna, thus bringing the Jewish people within a few days' travel of Jerusalem. Our Mediterranean and Levant trade, hitherto much neglected, will be revived, affording facilities to reach Palestine from this country direct. It is your duty, men and Christians, to aid us peaceably, tranquilly, and triumphantly to repossess the land of our fathers, to which we have a legal, equitable, perpetual right, by a covenant which the whole civilized world acknowledges. That power and glory which were once our own, you now possess; the banner of the Crescent floats where the standard of Judah was once displayed; it is for you to unfurl it again on Mount Zion. It will redound to your honor—it will perpetuate your glory.

Since the period of the reformation we have enjoyed comparative tranquility. But free by law, we are not so by public opinion. Prejudice still scowls upon us, denying us that estimation, that influence, that portion of worldly honors and rights which should appertain to the citizen of every faith. We are not fully incorporated in the family of mankind. The afflictions under which the chosen people have suffered have entailed an awful responsibility upon Christians. Where is the warrant for this persecution of the Jews—this innate feeling of hostility and prejudice against them—on the part of Christians? We have lost all—country, government, kingdom and power. You have it all—it is yours. It was once ours—it is again to be restored to us. Dismiss, therefore, from your hearts all prejudice which still lurks there against the favored people of God, and consider their miraculous preservation as a light and beacon for the great events which are to follow. They are worthy of your love, your confidence and respect. Is it nothing, my friends, to have outlived all the nations on earth, and to have survived all who sought to ruin and destroy us? Where are those who fought at Marathon, Salamis, and Plataea? Where are the generals of Alexander—the mighty myriads of Xerxes? Where are the bones of those which once whitened the plains of Troy? We only hear of them in the pages of history. But if you ask where are the descendants of the million of brave souls who fell under the triple walls of Jerusalem? Where are the subjects of David and Solomon, and the brethren of Jesus? I must answer, here. Here we are—miraculously preserved—the pure and unmixed blood of the Hebrews, having the law for our light, and God for our Redeemer. How we have suffered, my friends, for steadily

adhering to a belief in his unity, I need not pain you by recapitulating. Even to this day persecution has not sheathed its bloody sword. But if the Jews for eighteen hundred years have been assailed by the sword, by the rack and the Inquisition, their great, and abiding, and absorbing faith has sustained them in the midst of those trials. Countrymen and citizens, thank God, your hands and hearts are free from the stains of such iniquity. If you have wronged Israel, it has arisen only from the prejudices of early education. Dismiss such feelings; be better acquainted with the Jew, and learn to estimate his virtues. See him in the bosom of his family, the best of fathers, and truest of friends. See children dutiful, affectionate, and devotedly attached, supporting their parents with pride and exultation. See wives the most faithful, mothers the most devoted. Go with me into the haunts of misery, where the daughters of misfortune walk the streets of this great city, and see if among them you find *one* Jewess. Come with me to the prisons, where crime, riots, and vice abound, and examine whether a Jew is the tenant of a dungeon. Go into your almshouses, and ascertain how many Jews are recipients of your bounty. See them all, the friends of virtue and of temperance, obedient to the laws and devoted to the country that protects them. Are we not, then, worthy of your confidence and esteem, discharging, as we do, every moral obligation imposed upon us?

The United States, the only country which has given civil and religious rights to the Jews equal with all other sects; the only country which has not persecuted them, has been selected and pointedly distinguished in prophecy as *the* nation which, at a proper time, shall present to the Lord his chosen and trodden-down people, and pave the way for their restoration to Zion. But will they go, I am asked, when the day of redemption arrives? All will go who feel the oppressor's yoke. *We* may repose where we are free and happy, but those will go who, bowed to the earth by oppression, would gladly exchange a condition of vassalage for the hope of freedom: that hope the Jews can never surrender; they cannot stand up against the prediction of our prophets, against the promises of God; they cease to be a nation, a people, a sect, when they do so. Let the people go—point out the path for them in safety, and they will go, not all, but sufficient to constitute the elements of a powerful government; and those who are happy here may cast their eyes towards the sun as it rises, and know that it rises on a free and happy people beyond the mountains of Judea, and feel doubly happy in the conviction that God has redeemed all his promises to Jacob. I should think that the very idea, the hope, the prospect, and above all, the certainty of restoring Israel to his own and promised land, would arouse the whole civilized world to a cordial and happy co-operation.

Let me therefore impress upon your minds the important fact,

that the liberty and independence of the Jewish nation may grow out of a single effort which this country may make in their behalf. That effort is to procure for them a permission to purchase and hold land in security and peace; their titles and possessions confirmed; their fields and flocks undisturbed. They want only *protection*, and the work is accomplished. The Turkish government cannot be insensible to the fact that clouds are gathering around them, and destiny, in which they wholly confide, teaches them to await the day of trouble and dismemberment. It is their interest to draw around them the friendly aid and co-operation of the Jewish people throughout the world, by conferring these reasonable and just privileges upon them, and when Christianity exerts its powerful agency, and stretches forth its friendly hand, the rights solicited will be cheerfully conferred. When the Jewish people can return to Palestine, and feel that in their persons and property they are as safe from danger as they are under Christian governments, they will make their purchases of select positions, and occupy them peaceably and prosperously; confidence will with them take the place of distrust and, by degrees, the population in every part of Syria being greatly increased, will become consolidated, and ready to unfold the standard when political events shall demonstrate to them that the time has arrived. Remember, my countrymen, you whose aid is invoked to assist in the restoration, that we are to return as we went forth; to bring back to Zion the faith we carried away with us. The temple under Solomon, which we built as Jews, we must again erect as the chosen people. For two thousand years we have been pursued and persecuted, and we are yet here; assemblages of men have formed communities, built cities, established governments, rose, prospered, decayed, and fell, and yet *we* are here. Rome conquered Greece, and she was no longer Greece. Rome, in turn, became conquered, and there are but few traces now of the once mistress of the world; yet we are still here, like the fabled Phœnix, ever springing from its ashes, or, more beautifully typical, like the bush of Moses, which ever burns, yet never consumes. Come therefore to our aid, and take the lead in this great work of restoration. Let the first movement for the emancipation of the Jewish nation come from this free and liberal country. Call to mind that Moses was the first founder of a republican form of government, and that the first settlers on this continent adopted the Mosaic laws as their code, and strictly enforced them.

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